

Issue Brief – Nursing Recruitment & Retention

UTAH STATE DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER

NUMBER DHS-07-14

NURSING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Utah State Developmental Center (USDC) is requesting funding to recruit and retain Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). The USDC is requesting an appropriation for FY 2007 of \$168,100 with \$47,600 from General Funds and \$120,500 from federal Medicaid funds.

OBJECTIVE

The goal of the USDC is to provide 24-hour residential and active treatment services which include the following: medical; dental; physical; occupational therapy; speech therapy, recreational; psychological; social work; and day training. The Developmental Center is required by the federal government to provide quality medical care in a timely manner. Failure to meet those guidelines could result in loss of federal funds.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The residents at the USDC have multiple medical diagnoses which often require drug intervention. More than half of the population has a dual diagnoses of mental illness and mental retardation. In addition, more than half have epilepsy. The residents require round the clock nursing care.

The request for additional funding is because USDC has experienced a difficult time recruiting and retaining nurses. Some of the causes are a nursing shortage, nurses reaching the age of retirement, high turnover rates, and the compensation package.

Nursing Shortage

Nationally there is a nursing shortage with Utah being no exception. Currently there are 11 unfilled nursing positions at the Development Center. In FY 2005, there were over 450 open nursing positions in Utah. In addition, the Developmental Center must compete with the local health care industry for nursing services.

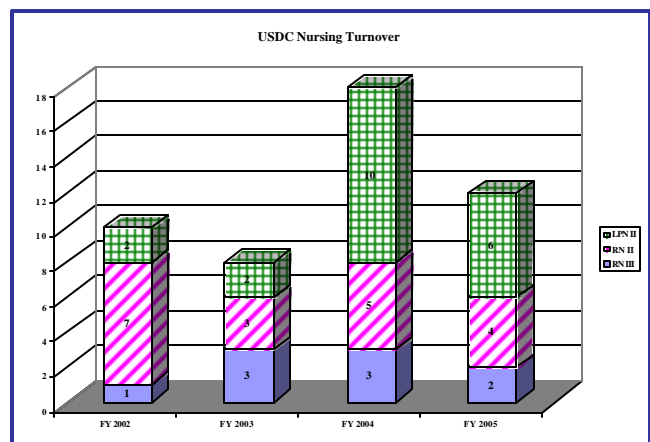
Nurses in the Field Approaching Retirement Age

One of the factors affecting the nursing shortage is retirement. The average age of nurses nationally is 43. Most nurses retire at 50 because of the physical demands of the work or “burnout”. It is projected that the USDC will lose up to 25 percent of their RN III's, 28 percent of their RN II's, and 33 percent of their LPN's within 3 years to retirement.

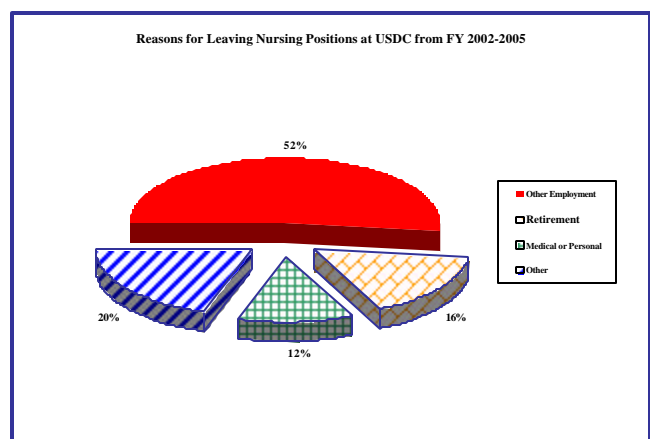
High Turnover Rate

USDC has experienced a high turnover rate because of the working conditions, i.e. difficult patients, shift work, overtime, and low pay. The turnover rate for FY

2002 was 19 percent, 15 percent for FY 2003, 35 percent for FY 2004 and 23 percent for FY 2005 as shown in the following graph:



The following graph shows the reasons nurses left USDC (Note: The Other category includes the following reasons : promotion; quit; fired; died; or moved:



Compensation Package

USDC is unable to competitively recruit for nurses because of the salary scale and the shortage of nurses in the State. During the past year, the USDC Human Resource Department received 63 inquiries but because of the compensation package was unable to fill the vacancies.

RECOMMENDATION

The Subcommittee may want to consider prioritizing this request for FY 2007 of \$168,100 with \$47,600 in General Funds and \$120,500 from federal Medicaid funds for the recruitment and retention of nurses.